

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 261530Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9645

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13954

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IT

SUBJECT: ITALY, LEBANON AND THE PLO

SUMMARY: A SHORT "PRIVATE" VISIT TO LEBANON AND DAMASCUS BY THREE ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES (SOCIALIST, COMMUNIST AND DEMOCRISTIAN) HAS CREATED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF HEARTBURN IN THE ITALIAN MFA. THE DEPUTIES HAVE CALLED FOR A MORE VIGOROUS ITALIAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORT IN COMMECTION WITH LEBANON, FOR AN EXAMINATION OF THAT QUESTION IN THE CHAMBER'S FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, AND FOR OPENING OF A PLO OFFICE IN ROME. END SUMMARY.

1. AN INFORMED OFFICIAL OF THE MFA RECENTLY COMPLAINED MILDLY TO AN EMBOFF ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE DEPUTIES. ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY MET WITH "CHIEF OF THE CHRISTIAN MODERATES, RAYMOND EDDE", THEY SPENT THE BULK OF THEIR TIME WITH THE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING ARAFAT. (A SECOND SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE DELEGATION DECLINED ITALIAN EMBASSY OFFER TO ARRANGE MEETINGS WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS, LEADING THE EMBASSY TO REFUSE TO ACCOMPANY THE GROUP TO MEETINGS WITH THE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS.)

2. THE DELEGATION RETURNED TO ROME AND REPORTED, IN A PRESS

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CONFERENCE, ITS "IDEA AS TO HOW OUR COUNTRY COULD CONTRIBUTE

TO A SOLUTION TO THIS MOST COMPLEX MID-EAST PROBLEM", TO WIT, "ENCOURAGE, TO THE MAXIMUM CONTACTS, DIRECT AND IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, TO STOP FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND TO PROMOTE NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE DOMESTIC PROTAGONISTS." TO ASSURE THAT ITALIAN POLICY IS DIRECTED TO THIS END, THE DEPUTIES HAVE URGED THE CHAMBER'S FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR "URGENT AND PROFOUND" CONSIDERATION OF THE PROBLEM.

3. TO ALL OF WHICH OUR SOURCES, RESPOND SOTTO VOCE "SO WHAT'S NEW?". THE MFA HAS ON AT LEAST THREE OCCASIONS IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS URGED, VIA ITS EMBASSIES, THE INTERESTED MIDDLE EAST PARTIES, DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN, TO AGREE TO A CEASEFIRE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF NEGOTIATION FOR A SETTLEMENT. EVEN SO THE MFA RECOGNIZES THAT ITALY HAS LITTLE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN LEBANON, GIVING RISE TO A CERTAIN FEELING OF GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS TO ASSUAGE DOMESTIC POLITICAL EMOTION.

4. OUR PRIME MFA CONTACT SAID THAT THE GOI HAS "NO INTENTION" OF ALLOWING THE PLO TO OPEN AN INDEPENDENT OFFICE IN ROME. (A PLO REPRESENTATIVE NOW OPERATES OUT OF THE ARAB LEAGUE OFFICES HERE BUT IS GIVEN NO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION.) THE REASON FOR REFUSAL, OUR CONTACT SAID, IS THAT THE USG WOULDN'T BE PLEASED. IN HIS ASSESSMENT, THE USG IS ANXIOUS TO HOLD THE PLO IN PLACE AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER OUR ELECTIONS, AND ITALY WOULD NOT WANT SO TO CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCING THE PLO CAUSE.

COMMENT: UNSAID, BUT MORE GERMANE TO THE GOI'S REASON FOR NOT ALLOWING THE PLO TO OPEN AN OFFICE, IS THAT THE PRESENT DISARRAY IN THE PLO HAS TAKEN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PRESSURE OFF THE MFA. THERE IS NO GOOD REASON FOR THE GOI TO ACCEDE SO LONG AS THERE IS THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF WHAT OR WHO REPRESENTS THE PALESTINIANS. BEAUDRY

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